

Homily 21st Sunday Ordinary Time, 2021

How many times have you heard the phrase: 'The bottom line is....' It means you have come to a crossroads where a decision has to be made with no wiggle room left in the negotiations. You have to choose one way or another. It reminds me of Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Less Travelled': 'Two paths diverged in a wood and I took the one less travelled and that made all the difference...'

Joshua in today's First Reading basically says to The Chosen People at the Northern Shechem Sanctuary - the bottom line is you either choose the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of your ancestors or you choose foreign gods who are made of stone. The Chosen people had reached that crossroads in the wood where they had to decide what path to follow, that of the living Covenant God of relationship or gods with eyes but do not see gods with ears who do not hear.

In The Gospel of today's liturgy Jesus has just proclaimed Himself the 'The Living Bread come down from Heaven' He then adds, '..and anyone who eats this Bread will live forever..' This was not only too much for the Jewish leaders but even a step too far for some of his disciples. With no wiggle room left many walk away. Jesus knows that He has reached an important crossroads in His Mission and in the lives of the 12. He turns to them and asks: 'Do you want to leave too?' It is Simon Peter, demonstrating his leadership responsibility, who pipes up: 'Where Lord would we go? You have the message of eternal life!' From that moment the 12, in spite of their human weaknesses, stick by Jesus through thick and thin. Of course they doubt and abandon Jesus and Judas betrays Him but by and large, in their fragility, they still know that they have nowhere else to go.

What do these texts mean for us today? If we were in the prayer of imaginative contemplation putting ourselves in that crowd as a disciple of Jesus what is our answer to the question: 'Do you too want to go away too? Is this message too much for you? Do you really believe that if you follow me and eat this Bread that you will live forever? If our answer is like that of Peter should we not, in spite of our weaknesses and failings, throw ourselves headlong into the Mission of Jesus and commit ourselves 100% to God's plan for us accepting His Holy Will. The crossroad is not of The Chosen People nor is it of the 12 but we today have reached that 'road which diverged in a wood' Will we really opt for the road less travelled? I so often get stuck at the crossroads!